

Segment 8 – Designing Process for Professional Development

Bev Showers describes the elements of effective staff development.

Interviewer:

What is meant by design of staff development?

Bev Showers:

Going back to the Iowa Professional Development Model—as you look at this, you can see that we begin at the beginning by studying student data to determine need. And then we set some fairly specific goals for student learning. What do we want to accomplish this year? And that brings us to selecting content. What kind of staff development content is most likely to help students grow in the areas we've identified? And then you get to the design. How are we going to design our staff development experience?

As laid out in teacher quality legislation, there is a fairly specific design, which has to do with including this theory of whatever innovation you're about to learn. [The design includes] what your treatment is going to be, what this theory is, how it works, what the research is behind that particular innovation, how we set expectations for student learning. When this has been done well, how much did students learn? So in the theory part of the design of training, you want to get out in front of all of the participants: why are we doing this, how does it work, what can we expect from it?

And then you generally have demonstrations, which mean either taped demonstrations with children, or live demonstrations with adults, or some kind of simulations. You need people to understand how this works. And being a participant or an observer of it helps to understand how it works. So when we say demonstrations, the 's' is intentional. It's plural. We don't do it just once. And depending on the grade level and the subject areas the innovation is intended for, that kind of determines how many demonstrations we are going to need.

And then we come to practice opportunities. You're going to have theory and demonstrations and practice opportunities in your design. And practice opportunities include things like peer teaching, where we take lessons that are already designed and teach them to each other in small groups, to begin to get a sense of how it works. It includes lesson design, where we take our own curricular materials and sit together and begin to think through how we would use this particular instructional strategy. So, some forms of practice need to happen immediately, after demonstrations, before people forget. Early practice consolidates skill and makes it possible to actually do things in the classroom. When you use a training design that includes theory, and demonstrations, and practice, you're talking about much longer training settings than you normally have. So, it has to be budgeted for.